10: d'Orleans--320 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 291, 437, 443, 551

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "...We were overrun by a troop of female hawkers, who settled themselves down in our quarters and spread out their wares for sale. These women all wear the same sort of dress, namely a silk petticoat with a scarf to match, some of them having their hair cropped close after the Siamese fashion, which is a very ugly one. After a few days we get quite familiar and call these young ladies by their proper names. They either have some name which indicates their sex, followed by the qualification of small, pretty, or what not; or else they bear the name of some good quality, such as peace, happiness, prosperity, jewel. The same saleswomen came back every day, asking an exorbitant price for every article and not showing any inclination to rebate it. However, they are very good-natured in the bargaining which follows, and seem as well pleased if they do not effect a sale as when, after a long discussion, we end by making a purchase."

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

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"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4).

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

844

Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

554

When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "Phi," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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847

Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

554

In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

584

Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate